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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00

SP-02 L-01 PM-03 EB-03 OMB-01 TRSE-00 PRS-01 ACDA-10

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---------- 120048
R 171857Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9054
SECDEF
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 02471

LIMDIS

DEFENSE FOR IQA

E.O. 11652: XGDS-L
TAGS: MPOL. NATO , UK
SUBJ: UK DEFENSE CUTS
REF: (A) STATE 37545; (B) LONDON 2245; (C) LONDON 1980

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTEL A, WE CONVEYED TO HOCKADAY (DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMS), PROTECT. THE POINTS MADE IN PARA 2 AND 3 REFTEL A. HOCKADAY. IN A CONSIDERED PEPLY, SAID THAT HMG IS FULLY AWARE OF ITS OBLIGATION TO FORMALLY CONSULT AND WOULD NOT HESITATE TO DO SO IF HMG CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY. HOCKADAY SAID MINISTERS DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS WAS NECESSARY AND IN ANY EVENT ROY MASON IS WRITING AT LENGTH TO THE SYG ON THE WHOLE MATTER OF THE PROPOSED DEFENSE EXPENDITURE CUTS. THE LETTER, FORWARD DATED TO 19 FEBRUARY, IS ALSO BEING DELIVERED, ON A PERSONAL BASIS, TO GEORGE LEBER AS WELL AS SEARETARY RUMSFELD. THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DEFENSE PLANNING COMMITTEE WILL RECEIVE COPIES ON THE 19TH OF FEBRUARY ITSELF. HOCKADAY ALSO MADE THE POINT, QUITE POINTEDLY, THAT IF ROY MASON'S LETTER
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STIMULATES QUESTIONS, OBVIOUSLY THE MOD WILL WISH TO

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DISCUSS SUCH MATTERS AS MAY BE RAISED. HE EMPHASIZED AGAIN, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WOULD BE NO INTENTION "TO FORMALLY CONSULT..

2. HOCKADAY EMPHASIZED THAT FROM A DOMESTIC POLITICAL VIEWPOINT, ROY MASON FEELS THAT HE CAN NOT AFFORD THE DELAY INHERENT IN THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN NATO AND, SINCE THE REDUCTIONS CUT "TAIL" AND NOT "TEETH", MINISTERS ARE RESISTING BECOMING IMMESHED "ON POINTS MANY OF WHICH ARE VERY MARGINAL TO NATO". HOCKADAY SAID THAT ROY MASON FEELS THAT HIQ LEFT-WING IS "BAYING FOR BLOOD". MASON IS GOING TO HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN HANDLING THE PRESENTATIONAL ASPECT OF DEFENSE CUTS "SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER THAN THE CUTS IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE FOR OTHER DEPARTMENTS" -- HE MENTIONED AS AN EXAMPLE, THAT WHILE DEFENSE IS BEING REDUCED BY ABOUT 4 PERCENT IN 78-79, THE REDUCTION FOR EDUCATION IS OVER 9 PERCENT, HOUSING 8 PERCENT, AND 7 PERCENT ON LAW AND ORDER. HOCKADAY QUOTED THE FOLLOWING OVERALL REDUCTIONS COMPARED WITH "PREVIOUS PLANS" IN 77-78 OF 177 MILLION POUNDS, IN 78-79 OF 193 MILLION POUNDS, AND 79-80 OF 164 MILLION POUNDS (IN 1975 SURVEY PRICES). HE MADE THE POINT THAT THESE REDUCTIONS IN PLANNED EXPENDITUPE IMPLY FOR 78-79 AND 79-80 A CUT OF ONLY 18 MILLION POUNDS BELOW THE FIGURE FOR 75-76 -- WHICH HE NOTED WAS LESS THAN ONE HALF OF ONE PERCENT. HOCKADAY EMPHASIZED THAT IT IS HMG'S CONSIDERED JUDGEMENT THAT THE PROPOSED NEW CUTBACKS IN DEFENSE SPENDING WILL NOT, REPEAT NOT, IMPINGE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BRITAIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO NATO. HE EMPHASIZED THIS POINT BY SAYING THAT HAD NOT MINISTERS THOUGHT SO, THEY WOULD HAVE FELT OBLIGED TO "CONSULT".

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R 171857Z FEB 76
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9055
SECDEF
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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LIMDIS

3. CONCERNINE PUBLICATION OF THE DEFENSE WHITE PAPER, THE DATE IS AT PRESENT SET FOR MARCH 17. MOD HAD ENTERTAINED THE IDEA OF FURTHER SLIPPAGE, BUT MASON HAD CONCLUDED THAT SUCH A COURSE IS "POLITICALLY INADVISABLE". MASON BELIEVES THAT PRESSURES IN PARLIAMENT FOR A DEBATE BEFORE EASTER CAN NOT BE CONTAINED. HE IS LO:TH.E TO HAVE A DEBATE WITHOUT THE WHITE PAPER BEING AVAILABLE. THEREFORE, MOD HAS CONCLUDED THAT THE WHITE PAPER SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AT LEAST A MONTH IN ADVANCE OF THE EASTER RECESS -- HENCE THE MARCH 17 TARGET DATE IS NOW FIRM. AS PUT TO US, A DEFENSE DEBATE WITHOUT THE INFORMATION IN THE WHITE PAPER BEING AVAILABLE WOULD BE "TO MAKE AN ABSOLUTELY HELLISH MESS OF IT". HOCKADAY CONTINUED BY OBSERVING THAT HE THOUGHT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DO EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO PREVENT THE OPPOSITION FROM USING "ONE OF THEIR DAYS" TO DEBATE DEFENSE BEFORE MARCH 17.

4. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF MASON'S LETTER TO SECDEF DELIVERED IN WASHINGTON TODAY, COVERING A LETTER TO SYG LUNS, WE BELIEVE IT INAPPROPRIATE TO PRESS THE POINTS MADE IN
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PARAS 2 AND 3 REFTEL A AT A LEVEL SENIOR TO HOCKADAY.

5. CONCERNING PARA 5, REFTEL A, WE WILL SEEK DATA ASAP.

SPIERS

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